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ABSTRACT

The first of two sections of this report is a brochure which provides a description of METNET, the Montana Educational Telecommunications Network, which is designed to provide instructional and educational course work for K-12 students and students enrolled in units of the Montana University System, vocational-technical centers, and community colleges; instructional and professional development training for teachers and others involved in education; and telecommunication capabilities to schools, state agencies, subdivisions of state government, and public libraries. The brochure also provides brief descriptions of the METNET BBS (electronic bulletin board system) and how to participate in it; inservice training; local area networks; wide area networks; and the Star Schools program. The second section presents Chapter No. 622, the state legislation that provides for the establishment of the network. The act outlines the following: (1) the purpose of the legislation and the aims of the network; (2) agency cooperation and responsibilities; (3) fee collection and disposition for operational costs; (4) apportionment of costs; (5) definition of and revenue for state equalization aid; (6) purpose of state equalization aid and duties of the board of public education for distribution; and (7) appropriations, repealer (of Section 20-7-1001, MCA), and effective date. (DB)

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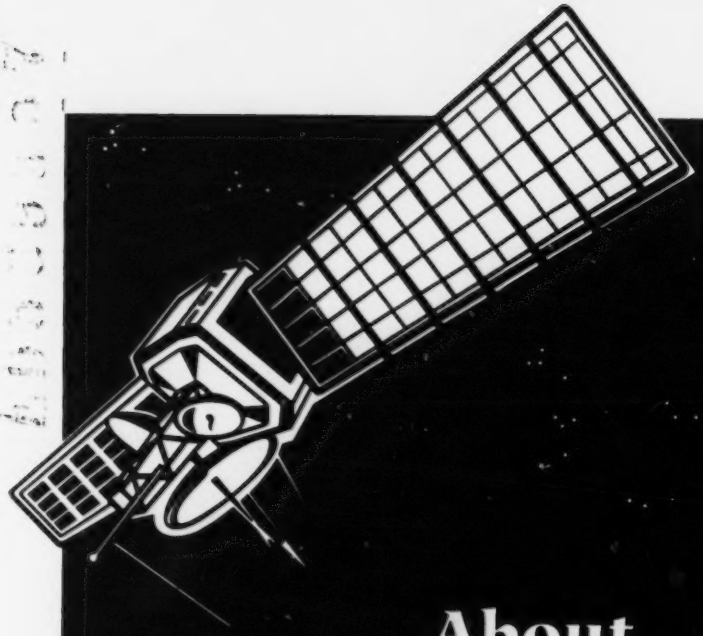
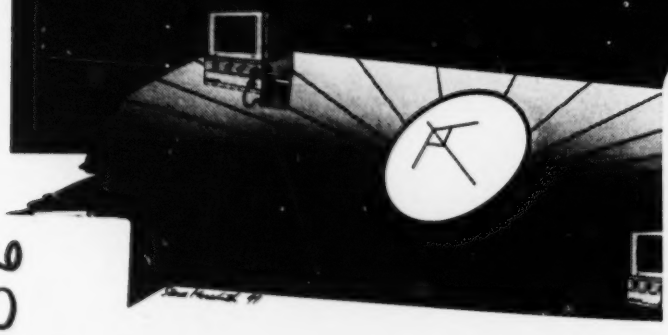


About

METNET

Montana Educational Telecommunications Network

BBS 800-346-8654



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Department of Educational Technology
Office of Public Instruction
Nancy Keenan, Superintendent

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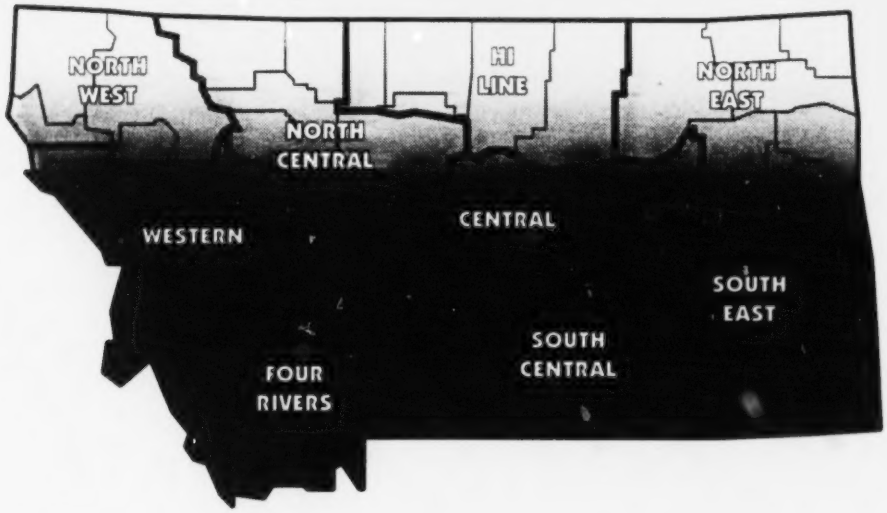
What is METNET:

The Montana Legislature established the Montana Educational Telecommunications Network (METNET) "to support education, economic development and government services in the state." The Office of Public Instruction, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Department of Administration are working cooperatively to develop METNET.



METNET Provides:

- instructional and educational course work for K-12 students, students enrolled in units of the Montana University System, vocational-technical centers and community colleges;
- instructional and professional development training for teachers and others involved in education; and
- telecommunication capabilities to schools, state agencies, subdivisions of state government and public libraries.

To Participate on the METNET BBS:

Please dial into the BBS system for registration and approval to participate in BBS activities. For assistance, please call 444-1626.

Equipment Necessary and Initial Settings:
Any computer
Modem - 1200, 2400, 9600 Baud Modem
Communication Software Settings -
(8 data bits, no parity, 1 stop bit)
Helena area 444-2068 or outside Helena 800-346-8654

METNET Bulletin Board System (BBS):

Montana educators and those interested in Montana education using computers, telephone lines and telecommunication software on the METNET BBS are provided a means to exchange ideas, messages, curriculum guides, lesson plans and other instructional materials. Call 800-346-8654 with your modem to participate.

Inservice Training:

Teachers and administrators of elementary, secondary and postsecondary programs will be trained in the use and integration of telecommunication technologies in the classroom.

Local Area Network (LAN):

A LAN is a group of computers connected in a local geographic area which allow the sharing of data, software and other hardware devices. The sharing of these resources increases communication between participating individuals to enhance productivity and efficiency. Demonstration LANs will be installed in METNET regional centers.

Wide Area Network (WAN):

WAN is a group of local area networks connected to share resources across a larger geographic area. The regional METNET LANs and BBS will be connected to form a statewide METNET system.

Star Schools:

An integrated telecommunications network of computers, modems, telephone lines and satellite dishes connecting students and teachers. The Pacific Northwest Star Schools Partnership includes the state education agencies of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington and the telecommunication program at Educational Service District (ESD) 101 to deliver student courses and teacher inservice training across the five-state region.

Information Dissemination:

The general area of educational telecommunications is growing at such a rapid rate that keeping current with new developments will be easier by sharing information through the METNET BBS and inservice training programs.

Dear Friends,

The mission of the Department of Educational Technology is to expand and equalize the opportunity to communicate knowledge, experience and information.

I would like to introduce the staff of the Department of Educational Technology. The individuals listed below are available to assist you in dealing with "Educational Technology" issues.

All of us are excited about this project; we are sure you will be too.

Nancy Keenan

Nancy Keenan
Superintendent

Department of Educational Technology

Mary Hartman, 444-2765.	Responsible for METNET and Star Schools administrative support.
Betsy Nordell, 444-1626.	METNET Bulletin Board System Coordinator.
Ron Lukenbill, 444-2080.	METNET Curriculum Specialist and Star Schools Coordinator.
Bob Morris, 444-3031.	METNET Network Design and Telecommunications Manager.
Gale Kramlick, 444-4411.	METNET Assistant Networking and Telecommunications Specialist.
Fran Briggeman, 444-3448.	Responsible for providing METNET administrative support.
Scott Buswell, 444-4326.	Assistant Superintendent for Educational Technology.
Jack Copps, 444-5643.	Deputy Superintendent, Office of Public Instruction.

These individuals can be easily contacted on the METNET BBS 800-346-8654.

1,000 copies of this public document were published at an estimated cost of 28¢ per copy, for a total cost of $280.00, which includes $280.00 for printing and $.00 for distribution.

CHAPTER NO. 622

[HB 30]

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A MONTANA EDUCATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORK TO SUPPORT EDUCATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES IN THE STATE; TO DESIGNATE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE NETWORK TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION, THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, AND THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION; TO PROVIDE AN APPROPRIATION AND OTHER FUNDING MECHANISMS FOR THE PROGRAM; AMENDING SECTIONS 20-9-343 AND 20-9-344, MCA; REPEALING SECTION 20-7-1001, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the school funding reform legislation in House Bill No. 28 (Chapter 11), Special Laws of June 1989, promotes the use of telecommunications technology for the purpose of enhancing the equal educational opportunities provided to students in the Montana public school system; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Administration, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Montana University System, with the assistance of private consulting services and other private and public entities, have followed the directive in House Bill No. 28 and have completed the needs assessment and network design for improvements in the Montana education system through telecommunications technology; and

WHEREAS, Montana's future depends on the ability to provide quality educational opportunities and on the ability to train and retrain the state's work force, regardless of location in the state; and

WHEREAS, telecommunications can contribute to equal educational opportunity for all Montanans through improved access to a wide range of educational needs, such as specialized coursework in languages, mathematics, and the sciences, college credit coursework, adult education, teacher inservice training, and preparation for professional recertification; and

WHEREAS, by both past actions and future commitments, the private sector has demonstrated its willingness to share in the funding for development and enhancement of an educational telecommunications network in Montana.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Montana:

Section 1. **Purpose — definition.** (1) The purpose of [sections 1 through 3] is to establish a Montana educational telecommunications network.

(2) For the purposes of [sections 1 through 3], "network" means the Montana educational telecommunications network (METNET).

(3) The aims of the network are to provide:

(a) instructional and educational coursework and materials through telecommunications delivery to students in kindergarten through 12th grade in the Montana public school system;

(b) instructional and educational coursework and materials through telecommunications delivery to students enrolled in units of the Montana university system, the vocational-technical centers, and the community colleges;

(c) instructional and professional development or other appropriate inservice training for teachers in the schools of the state; and

(d) telecommunications capabilities to agencies, subdivisions of state government, and public libraries in order to improve their ability to perform their responsibilities and duties.

Section 2. **Agency cooperation — responsibilities.** (1) To meet the objectives of the network, the following entities shall cooperate with one another:

(a) the department of administration, with its responsibilities for telecommunications for agencies of state government;

(b) the superintendent of public instruction, with a supervisory role over the public system of elementary and high schools; and

(c) the commissioner of higher education, with responsibilities to the Montana university system, the vocational-technical centers, and the community colleges.

(2) The responsibilities of the superintendent of public instruction to the network include but are not limited to:

(a) general supervision of delivery of educational materials through telecommunications to elementary and high school districts in the state;

(b) compilation, maintenance, and dissemination to participating school districts of information that identifies the educational programming available from within and from outside the state;

(c) training of teachers and other school personnel in the use of telecommunications technologies for instructional purposes;

(d) assistance to school districts in identifying and procuring the telecommunications technologies needed to interface with the network;

(e) identification of production capability for telecommunication of educational materials;

(f) assistance to participating school districts with group purchases of instructional and educational materials;

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(g) coordination with the commissioner of higher education and the units of the Montana university system to offer advanced placement courses, teacher inservice training, and other instruction through the network;

(h) payment of the superintendent's share of the network costs to the department of administration, as provided in [section 4];

(i) coordinate with the department of administration to ensure compatibility of network components, to minimize duplication of efforts on behalf of the network, and to maximize use of the network by school districts; and

(j) determine the kinds of equipment, inservice, and district accounting necessary to implement the provisions of [sections 1 through 3] for school districts.

(3) The responsibilities of the department of administration to the network include but are not limited to:

(a) provision of technical support to the coordinating agencies referred to in subsection (1);

(b) development of standards of compatibility for the network;

(c) procurement and management of network equipment and facilities that have shared use by multiple users or agencies;

(d) assistance with procurement, installation, maintenance, and operation of end-terminal equipment and facilities of the network;

(e) minimizing any duplication of equipment and facilities within the network and in conjunction with the department of administration's other networking capabilities;

(f) coordination of use of the network by state agencies, subdivisions of the state, and public libraries in a manner that does not interfere with the delivery of the primary network function of providing educational services to school districts and state units of higher education;

(g) studying the use of the network by Native American tribal colleges and other nonpublic education institutions in the state, with the long-range goal of coordinating the use of the network with those entities; and

(h) maintenance of cost and usage records and a billing system for user agencies for services rendered that incur marginal costs for the network.

(4) The responsibilities of the commissioner of higher education to the network include but are not limited to:

(a) coordination of the use of the network among the units of higher education and with the superintendent of public instruction and the department of administration;

(b) assistance to the units of the Montana university system to provide college credit courses through the network to students throughout the state;

(c) coordination with the superintendent of public instruction to develop advance placement courses for high school students in Montana, teacher inservice training, and other services and instruction through the network;

(d) assistance to the units of the Montana university system, the vocational-technical centers, and the community colleges in defining their specific needs for interfacing with the network;

(e) assistance to participating units, centers, and colleges with group purchases of instructional and educational materials; and

(f) determination of the kinds of equipment, inservice, and accounting necessary to implement the provisions of [sections 1 through 3] for the university system, community colleges, and vocational-technical centers.

Section 3. **Fee collection and disposition for operational costs.** As a condition of participation in the network, the Montana university system, vocational-technical centers, and community colleges shall collect from appropriate discretionary funds in a manner approved by the board of regents an amount not to exceed $1 for each full-time equivalent student enrolled in the units, centers, or colleges. The funds collected must be deposited with the commissioner of higher education by July 1 of the fiscal year, beginning with fiscal year 1992 for the purposes of [section 2(4)]. The commissioner of higher education shall pay the department of administration the commissioner's share of the network costs, as provided in [section 4].

Section 4. **Apportionment of costs.** The superintendent of public instruction and the commissioner of higher education shall share on a prorated basis according to the related student counts any costs incurred by the department of administration for the purposes of [section 2(3)].

Section 5. Section 20-9-343, MCA, is amended to read:

"20-9-343. Definition of and revenue for state equalization aid. (1) As used in this title, the term "state equalization aid" means the money deposited in the state special revenue fund as required in this section plus any legislative appropriation of money from other sources for distribution to the public schools for the purposes of payment of guaranteed tax base aid and equalization of the foundation program *and for the Montana educational telecommunications network as provided in [section 1].*

(2) The superintendent of public instruction may spend funds appropriated for state equalization aid as required for *the purposes of* guaranteed tax base aid ~~and~~, *the* foundation program ~~purposes~~, *and the Montana educational telecommunications network*, throughout the biennium.

(3) The following must be paid into the state special revenue fund for state equalization aid to public schools of the state:

(a) money received from the collection of income taxes under chapter 30 of Title 15, as provided by 15-1-501;

(b) except as provided in 15-31-702, money received from the collection of corporation license and income taxes under chapter 31 of Title 15, as provided by 15-1-501;

(c) money allocated to state equalization from the collection of the severance tax on coal;

(d) money received from the treasurer of the United States as the state's shares of oil, gas, and other mineral royalties under the federal Mineral Lands Leasing Act, as amended;

(e) interest and income money described in 20-9-341 and 20-9-342;

(f) money received from the state equalization aid levy under 20-9-360;

(g) income from the lottery, as provided in 23-5-1027;

(h) the surplus revenues collected by the counties for foundation program support according to 20-9-331 and 20-9-333;

(i) investment income earned by investing money in the state equalization aid account in the state special revenue fund; and

(j) 15% of the income and earnings of all coal severance tax funds as provided in 17-5-704(2).

(4) The superintendent of public instruction shall request the board of investments to invest the money in the state equalization aid account to maximize investment earnings to the account.

(5) Any surplus revenue in the state equalization aid account in the second year of a biennium may be used to reduce any appropriation required for the next succeeding biennium."

Section 6. Section 20-9-344, MCA, is amended to read:

"**20-9-344. Purpose of state equalization aid and duties of the board of public education for distribution — conditions of first payment.** (1) The money available for state equalization aid must be distributed and apportioned to provide:

(a) an annual minimum operating revenue for the elementary and high schools in each county, exclusive of revenues required for debt service and for the payment of any costs and expense incurred in connection with any adult education program, recreation program, school food services program, new buildings and grounds, and transportation; *and*

(b) the Montana educational telecommunications network as provided in [section 1].

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(2) The board of public education shall administer and distribute the state equalization aid in the manner and with the powers and duties provided by law. To this end, the board of public education shall:

(a) adopt policies for regulating the distribution of state equalization aid in accordance with the provisions of law and in a manner that provides for monthly distribution to each district of its foundation program amount and to each county and district distribution of its guaranteed tax base aid;

(b) have the power to require reports from the county superintendents, budget boards, county treasurers, and trustees as it considers necessary; and

(c) order the superintendent of public instruction to distribute the state equalization aid on the basis of each district's annual entitlement to the aid as established by the superintendent of public instruction. In ordering the distribution of state equalization aid, the board of public education may not increase or decrease the state equalization aid distribution to any district on account of any difference that may occur during the school fiscal year between budgeted and actual receipts from any other source of school revenue.

(3) The board of public education may order the superintendent of public instruction to withhold distribution of state equalization aid or order the county superintendent of schools to withhold county equalization money from a district when the district fails to:

(a) submit reports or budgets as required by law or rules adopted by the board of public education; or

(b) maintain accredited status.

(4) Prior to any proposed order by the board of public education to withhold distribution of state equalization aid or county equalization money, the district is entitled to a contested case hearing before the board of public education, as provided under the Montana Administrative Procedure Act.

(5) If a district or county receives more state equalization aid than it is entitled to, the county treasurer shall return the overpayment to the state upon the request of the superintendent of public instruction in the manner prescribed by the department of commerce.

(6) (a) The first foundation program payment and guaranteed tax base aid payment must be based on an estimate of 20% of the entitlement of each district or county and distributed by July 15 of the school fiscal year.

(b) Each subsequent monthly payment must be at least 7% of the entitlement of each district or county."

Section 7. **Appropriations.** (1) There is appropriated $450,000, $300,000 of which is from the general fund, to the department of administration for each year of the biennium ending June 30, 1993, to be used for the

Montana educational telecommunications network if $150,000 of the appropriated amount is available in cash or equipment value from federal or other sources. If less than $150,000 of the appropriated amount is available from federal or other funds, the allowable expenditures from the appropriation are reduced proportionately and any remainder of the appropriation must revert to the general fund.

(2) There is appropriated for each fiscal year of the biennium ending June 30, 1993, from the state equalization aid account in 20-9-343 to the superintendent of public instruction an amount equal to $1 for each average number belonging calculated for the state for the previous school fiscal year for the purposes of [section 2(2)].

(3) There is appropriated each year of the biennium ending June 30, 1993, to the department of administration from the money collected under the provisions of [section 3] and subsection (2) of this section the amount equal to any costs incurred by the department of administration for the purposes of [section 2(3)].

Section 8. **Repealer.** Section 20-7-1001, MCA, is repealed.

Section 9. **Effective date.** [This act] is effective on passage and approval.

Approved April 24, 1991.